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ABSTRACT

Books on audiotape or videotape can be used in schools to provide independent reading experiences to beginning readers with limited preschool exposure to print. In addition, enabling children to hear stories while they look at the book may provide another support for literacy development in children at risk for reading difficulty. The efficacy of providing such prereading experiences to at-risk children was tested with 63 kindergarten and first-grade students in north-central West Virginia, who were identified as at-risk because of academic need, low income, learning disabilities, or visual or auditory impairments that might affect reading ability. Students were divided into two groups. One group heard audiotape recordings of books while they followed along in their own copies of the book; the other group watched and listened to videotapes of the pages of the book. Pretests and posttests covered listening comprehension, story retelling ability, and concepts about print. Results indicate that the audiotape condition was more beneficial than the videotape condition for developing children's concepts about print. Several children in the audiotape group spontaneously retold the story after the tape was over. The books on videotape seemed to encourage discussion among the children about concepts and vocabulary presented in the stories. The children did not give the videotapes their undivided attention and seemed to watch the videos the same way that they watch television at home, that is, in conjunction with social interaction and other activities. Contains 15 references. (SV)

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INCREASING BEGINNING READERS' READING SUCCESS WITHOUT INCREASING DIRECT INSTRUCTION TIME BY USING BOOKS ON TAPE

Introduction

Children who come to school with little exposure to books begin at a distinct disadvantage to their peers who have listened to stories for years (Flood, 1977; Kirby, 1992; Scarborough, Dobrich, & Hager, 1991; Teale, 1981). Teachers do read stories to their classes; however, children with limited exposure to print probably need more opportunity to experience books than is afforded to them in the typical classroom. These children have not had the opportunity to predict outcomes, practice answering questions from text and learn basic sight words. Exposure to good readers and to people who are important in their lives engaged in reading activities are needed. Without frequent independent reading children will not become proficient readers (Allington, 1977); and in order to become proficient readers, they need to hear stories and become familiar with language in the context of stories.

The motivational aspects of learning to read cannot be overemphasized. It is important to help children learn to enjoy reading as we teach them to read. Children need to learn to value reading so they will read for enjoyment and knowledge (Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez, & Teale, 1993). Marilyn Adams (1990) estimates that a typical child from a middle class background enters first grade with 1,000 to 1,700 hour of one-on-one picture book reading, while the corresponding child form a low income family averages only 25 hours. A problem typical in many homes today is that working parents have little time to read to their children. A problem frequently encountered in rural homes is that parent do not have adequate reading skills themselves or they are unaware of the importance of reading to their children. For years researchers have been pointing out that children who read little are least likely to read well (Adams, 1990; Allington, 1977; Allington, 1994; Bell, 1993; Elster, 1994; Heath, 1982; Manning, Manning, & Cody, 1988; Morrow, 1988; Slavin, Karweit, & Wasik, 1992/1993; Teale & Martinez, 1988).

Books on Audio Tape and Video Tape

Current research shows that children with disabilities have more difficulty processing auditory information than their nondisabled peers. The combination of visual and auditory stimuli by using books on tape may help to increase comprehension for these readers. Listening to stories is a beneficial language acquisition strategy for children who are at-risk for reading

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failure (Kies, Rodriguez & Granato, 1993; Roser, Hoffman & Farest, 1990; Teale, 1981). Technology helps provide tools which, when coupled with innovative methods, can help children who are experiencing difficulty learn to read. Some children need to hear material several time before it is comprehended and using audio taped stories with them may provide enough support for them to be able to read independently. Television has become a major part of children's lives. Television has the power to inform and to enhance learning if used properly. Shows like Sesame Street and other shows which promote early learning seem to be successful in teaching letter and number recognition. Reading Rainbow, a show which combines pictures from children's story books with a professional reader, appears to have increased circulation of these stories in public libraries and bookstores. It is apparent that television has the opportunity to interest children to participate in a variety of activities, including reading.

By using books on tape and books on video it may be possible to help children with limited exposure to print have the same opportunities afforded to their peers who live in a print rich environment. Enabling children to hear stories while they look at a video or hear a story while they hold the book and turn the pages for themselves may provide another support for literacy development in children at-risk for reading difficulty. Schools are ideal locations to implement these strategies as they may enhance teacher opportunities to promote independent, successful reading. In addition, there is a need for different types of activities which do not consume a great deal of teacher time. Having books on audio tape and books on video tape available in classrooms for individual and groups of students to use during non-instructional time may enable poor readers to help themselves understand printed materials.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the efficacy of alternative methods for providing at-risk children with pre-reading experiences. Two treatments were tested: 1) Repeated story readings using an auditory stimuli of books on tapes, 2) Repeated story readings using a visual and auditory stimuli of books on video tape. Pre and post group measures of listening comprehension, story retelling ability, and concepts about print were used to assess the effects of each approach. Listening comprehension is the student's ability to listen to a story read orally and answer questions on a literal and inferential level. Story retelling refers to the ability to relate the story presented in sequential order with as much detail as possible. Concepts about print refers to the student's ability to distinguish the letters from words, left to right progression during reading, and other factors related to successful experiences with printed material.

Participants and Materials

Sixty-three students (63) who were enrolled in a kindergarten or first grade Title 1 program and who were at-risk for reading difficulty were selected from three schools located in North Central West Virginia. Children qualified for Title I services based on academic need and low income. Additionally, four children were selected as case studies from the group of sixty-three for individual study. These children were selected because they had been identified as learning disabled, or because they had been identified as having difficulty in auditory processing, auditory discrimination, or visual processing which may effect their ability to read efficiently.

The eight books which were chosen for the intervention were commonly recommended, predictable stories which had either a refrain or sentence which was repeated throughout the text. Some of the books had a rhyming pattern to them. The books cover a variety of subjects, some had won awards. All of the books were written on a first or second grade reading level and were similar in content and complexity. The reading time for the stories ranged from eight to ten minutes. Video and audio tapes were made simultaneously to control for rate and tone of voice during the readings. The tapes were all made by the researcher with the researcher doing the reading. The camera for the video tapes was set up so that one page appears on the screen at a time. The camera continued to film while the pages were turned as it is believed that the children should see the action of the pages moving as this may help their developing concept about print. The only difference between the audio and video tapes was that there was a bell tone for the audio group to signal when it was time to turn the page since they did not have the visual cue that the page was being turned.

Procedure

Students in the books on tape condition listened to one of eight books with the corresponding prerecorded audio tape of the story being read by the researcher. The children listened to one tape a day during the course of the intervention. They also had a copy of the book to follow along with the tape during the presentation. Students in the books on video condition saw the pictures and words as they were being read on the video. They did not have the books in their hands. The children also viewed one tape a day during the course of the intervention. The books were shown in the same order in both conditions. The tapes were repeated four times each for a total of thirty-two days of story presentations.

Results

Overall, this intervention demonstrated the efficacy of providing children with limited exposure to print with books on audio and video tape. Results indicate that providing children with books on audio tape was more beneficial than using video tape for developing childrens' concepts about print. The success of the children in the audio tape group may be due to the fact that they

had the books in their hands, they turned the pages and they had the opportunity to follow along with their fingers as the stories were read. While they were never told that this was something they should be doing, they realized that this strategy would help them advance with the tape. Finger pointing probably provided the basis for children in the audio group to answer questions about the way text is read, from left to right, back to left, and from top to bottom which is measured on the Concepts About Print test.

Spending time with books appears to help in the identification of the concepts of letter and word recognition. The repeated presentations of the stories allowed the children to become familiar with the text which lead to them remembering what would come next. Many words were also repeated in the text which provided the opportunity to review these words several times during a reading. The exposure to words and sentences helped the children generalize the vocabulary to new situations. The children increased their understanding of print which is a first step to successful reading.

Several of the children in audio groups spontaneously went back and retold the story after the tape was over. During the first several days they seemed to spend more time watching the book of the child next to them than they did following their own book. As the intervention continued, they spent less time worrying about being on the correct page and more time listening to the story. By the end, the children had no trouble staying on the correct page and did not appear to get lost.

The books on video tape seemed to be beneficial for providing the opportunity to discuss concepts and vocabulary presented in the stories. This presentation mode may not have been as successful as the audio because the children do not give the television their undivided attention like they do in the audio condition. The children in the video group seemed to watch the videos the same way they watch television at home. They talked about things that were happening in the videos, things that the stories reminded them of, and they looked around the room at other things. Like many adults, watching television for these children was not something to be done in isolation. Adults, read magazines and newspapers, eat, and talk while watching television. On many occasions the conversations during story presentations were beneficial for the children. For instance, children would help explain the meaning of an unfamiliar word for another child, like "what's peek" or "what does crept up" mean at the time the story was being read.

Discussion

The best way to break the cycle of failure of poor readers is to provide remediation and alternative strategies as early as possible. Providing children with books on tapes and video appears to provide a means for children who have not been exposed to a large number of stories to make gains in language

comprehension and the necessary pre-reading skills. Using books on tapes and video appears to provide a simple, time efficient, and cost effective method for teachers to improve the listening and story telling abilities of students at-risk for reading failure. This research provides needed information on the benefits of using video and audio taped story presentations which has not been specifically addressed in the literature.

Children at-risk for reading failure and children with learning disabilities need to be provided with opportunities to be exposed to more literature than is currently afforded to them in the classroom. The repeated exposure to stories has been beneficial for many of the children in this study. Teachers should be encouraged to use can be given a simple intervention, like books on tape, to help their students improve their reading abilities and which will not interfere with content instruction. It is easier to prevent learning problems early than to attempt to remediate them in later grades. This research successfully increased concepts about print and listening comprehension skills for first graders who were at-risk for reading failure because of their designation as special education or are Title I students.

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